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RETURN OF THE HERDS.—A SCENE IN SWITZERLAND.

## THE RETURN OF THE HERDS.

ART has frequently displayed its genius, as well as taste, to the astonishment and delight of those attentively regarding its efforts, when its powers have been zealously tasked in the portraiture of cattle. The huge and rugged head, the prominent and fierce eye, and the dormant might so manifest in the entire structure of the father of the herd, tethered to a stake, or standing in his stall; the subdued countenance, yet vigorous form of the ox, as he turns to look at you while crossing the meadow in which he grazes, still chewing deliberately his mouthful of grass; and the more delicate figure of the cow, with an expression so surpassingly bland and gentle,—have all been depicted again and again with the most admirable reality and force.

In the highest rank of artists who have obtained great and deserved celebrity from such portraitures, is Paul Potter,—the gifted son of a far less gifted sire. Even at the early age of fifteen, he painted exquisite landscapes of sheep and goats, and particularly cattle; and was regarded at that period as a master eminently skilled in his profession. His outline was exceedingly correct; his colouring soft, transparent, and pleasing; his touch as spirited as it was delicate; and every one of his pictures was elaborately finished. His lamented death, before he was thirty years of age, prevented that multiplication of his paintings which was greatly to be desired; and so rare and valuable did they become, that a small work of Paul Potter's was purchased by the late Earl Grosvenor for nine hundred guineas.

The British painter, Ward, not to mention Sydney Cooper, and others of distinguished merit, appears to have caught Potter's falling mantle; and many a picture has been produced on his easel, alike startling in its truthfulness, and high in its finish, of which not only himself but his country might well be proud.

The engraving annexed to this article exhibits a Swiss scene, one of many adapted to kindle the enthusiasm of such painters. The poorer class in that country are chiefly supported by their goats; while the cows supply the cheese from which the richer class obtain their limited wealth. The cattle of the upland pastures strike the traveller as being particularly clean, neat, and healthy-looking, with much more of the slim make and breed of wild animals than our own cattle. They are, however, far from wild in reality, allowing the passer-by to come near, and even touch them, more readily than the cows in an American meadow. They are usually small, and, from their size as well as their general appearance, remind the English visitors of the "black cattle" of the north, though they are certainly of a finer breed than the Scotch. The cows are very active, fond of gambols, and full of spirit. Often do they follow strangers from rock to rock, merely to observe them; while the bulls, though their looks are fierce, do not make any attack. It is a beautiful sight to see the herd itself, consisting often of more than a hundred cows, thickly dotted over the open green slopes at the base of some high cliff above, or appearing here and there, amidst the woody glades of some valley, far, far beneath.

Almost every cow in Switzerland has a large bell suspended round her neck; and in passing along the valleys or wooded slopes of the mountains, it is very pleasing to hear the continuous tinklings of these bells from a large herd, more especially when approaching, as they often do, from a considerable distance. They serve to recall, to those who are familiar with the south of England, the sounds of musical bells worn by the cattle, and also others which they have heard on the driving of an ox-team. Each one is attended by a man and a boy; the latter chanting that which, though it cannot be called a distinct tune, is a very pleasing succession of sounds, and has been compared to the counter-tenor in a cathedral service. He sings away with unwearied lungs, as he trudges along almost from morning till night, while, every

now and then, the ploughman, as he directs the movement of the team, puts in his lower notes, but only in perfect concord. When the traveller stops in one of the Devonshire valleys, and listens to this simple music on either side of the hill-slope, he experiences a rural pleasure which the operation of ploughing could scarcely be expected to yield. This chanting is said to animate the cattle; certainly, the oxen move along with unusual agility, and the team may be watched for a long time, without seeing one lash of the whip, or hearing a single harsh word from the driver.

In the Alps, the finest cattle are the special pride of the keepers, who adorn the herd with a harmonious set of bells, chiming in accordance with the celebrated "Ranz des Vaches." This is commonly supposed to be a single air, but it stands, in fact, for a class of melodies. The literal meaning of the phrase is *cow-rous*, and the airs are derived from the manner in which the cows walk home along the Alpine paths at milking time. The herdsman goes before them, keeping every straggler in due line of march by the tones of his horn, while the whole herd wind along in obedience to them.

Though to an ordinary ear there is nothing striking in any of these compositions, the "Ranz des Vaches" so powerfully excites the associations of the Swiss, and impresses them when abroad with so violent a desire to return to their own country, that it was forbidden to be played in the Swiss regiments engaged in the French service on pain of death. Nor is such an effect a solitary case, for there is also a Scotch tune which has the same influence on some of the North Britons. In one of the battles in Calabria, a bagpiper of the 78th Highland regiment, when the light infantry charged the French, posted himself on the right, and remained in his solitary situation during the whole of the battle, animating the men with a famous Highland charging tune; and actually, upon the retreat and complete route of the French, changed it to another, equally celebrated in Scotland, upon the retreat of, and victory over an enemy. His next-hand neighbour guarded him so well, that he escaped unhurt. A similar story is told of a Highland piper at the battle of Waterloo.

To return to the Swiss cattle: the finest black cow is adorned with the largest bells, and the two next in appearance wear smaller ones. Early in the spring, when a herd is removed to the Alps, or some change takes place in the pastures, the herdsman dresses himself in all his finery, and singing the "Ranz des Vaches," is followed by three or four fine goats; next comes the choicest cow, adorned with the great bell; then come the next two in estimation with the smaller bells; and these are succeeded by the rest of the herd, walking one after another, and having in their rear the bull, with a one legged milking-stool on its horns; the procession being closed by a sledge bearing the various implements of the dairy.

It is surprising to see the pride and pleasure with which the cows stalk forth when ornamented with their bells; and though it might hardly be expected that such animals should be sensible of their rank, and affected by vanity and jealousy, yet such appears to be actually the fact. If the leading cow is deprived of her honours, she indicates her sense of her disgrace by lowing incessantly, abstaining from food, and losing condition. On the other hand, the happy rival on whom the badge of superiority has devolved, becomes the object of her vengeance, and is butted, wounded, and persecuted by her in a furious manner, until she regains her bell, or is entirely removed from the herd.

The Swiss peasant feels a strong attachment to his cow, and to pass the winter without having one of these animals to care for, would be to him extremely irksome. A large extent of land is therefore appropriated entirely to cattle, the Alpine pastures being estimated by the number of cows they will maintain—in the lower Alps about three acres, and in the upper from ten

to fifteen acres, being the usual average allotted to each. In several of the western cantons these pastures are generally private property; in the east, they commonly belong to the cantons, being apportioned among the different parishes, each having for its cows its *alp* or common pasture. Of this each inhabitant is entitled to a share from June to October.

The Alpine pasturages are elevated in heights of two or three, or more ranges, according to the season; the herdsmen ascending with their cows and goats, and frequently their sheep, as the heat increases from early spring to the high temperature of July and August. These persons are commonly hired to take charge of the cows of others, as few have such a number as would repay the labour of personally attending them; indeed, they are rarely able to maintain above five or six cows in winter, and usually not more than half that number. The pastures, however, form the principal source of subsistence and wealth to the inhabitants of the greater part of Switzerland, as well as of Savoy, the Voralberg, and the Tyrol.

Each pasture elevation has its own chalets for the herdsmen. These are rude bog-houses: the roof, composed of clumsy shingles, giving vent to the smoke in the absence of a chimney, and projecting eight or ten feet, forms a kind of piazza. M. Simond, who visited one of these dwellings, says:—"Here a fire was already blazing in a sort of pit or trench, dug around by way of a seat, and a huge kettle hung over for the purpose of cheese-making. We had plenty of cream furnished to us, in which the spoon literally stood on end, a kettle to make coffee, and wooden ladles instead of cups. All the utensils were made of maple, of linden, and of a sort of odorous pine, by the shepherds themselves, who bestow much time on this manufacture. We noticed the portable seat, with a single leg, oddly strapped to the back of those who milk the cows; the milkpails, the milk-hod fastened to their shoulders, the measures, the ladles made in the shape of shells, the milk-strainer (a tripod funnel full of pine-leaves), the vase in which rennet (used to coagulate milk) is preserved, the press, the form, and many other implements of their trade, all elegantly shaped and very clean." A wooden gallery, close to the projecting roof, is the place of rest, and is reached by a ladder. The ground around the rude dwelling is so broken and defiled by the cattle, that stepping-stones are required in order to reach the door. When the weather is tempestuous, the herdsmen remain up all night, calling to the cattle, as without this precaution they would take flight, run into dangers, and be lost.

It is a curious fact, but one most amply confirmed, that the whole of the butter produced in any one of the Alpine pastures is preserved sweet, or at least perfectly fit for

use, through the whole season, without any admixture of salt. The process adopted is, however, better fitted in its details for a work on domestic economy, than for the purpose contemplated in this article, and hence, with the bare announcement of the circumstance, we must now be content.

The owners of the cows in the Alpine pastures get credit daily for the quantity of milk furnished by these animals; and the produce of the sale of cheese at the end of the season, the expenses being deducted, is divided amongst them in proportion to the total quantity of milk furnished by each. Six or eight goats, or about four calves, sheep, or hogs, are deemed, as to feeding, equivalent to a cow; but a horse is reckoned equal to five or six cows, because he roots up the grass. In some parts of Switzerland, with forty cows, a cheese of forty-five pounds may be made daily; and in the vicinity of Althorf, they make, in the course of a hundred days, from the 20th of June, two cheeses daily, of twenty-five pounds each, from the milk of eighteen cows.

Cheese appears to have been an important article of export from Switzerland from a remote period. The canton of Glarus is the peculiar seat of the Schabzieger, or green cheese. This article is made of cow's, and not of goat's milk, as its name might seem to imply. The peasants, who feed their cattle in the mountains, bring down the curd in sacks, each containing about 200lbs., for which they get about thirty shillings. The cheese owes its peculiar appearance, smell, and flavour, to the blue pansy. This plant grows in small inclosures beside most of the cottages; it is dried, ground to powder, and in that state thrown into the mill along with the curd, in the proportion of three pounds of the plant to a hundred pounds of the curd. After being turned for about two hours and a half, the mixture is ready to be put into the shapes, when it dries sufficiently to be ready for use. When sold wholesale, it fetches about three-pence halfpenny per pound. This is considered a very lucrative trade; and the richest people in the canton are cheese-manufacturers. A considerable quantity of Schabzieger cheese is exported to America.

The district around Gruyere, in the canton of Fribourg, is also famous for its cheese, of which it produces about 25,000 cwt. a-year. It is made on a chain of mountains about ten leagues in length, and four in breadth: all the cheese, though made in the same manner, is not of the same quality; the lower pastures not being so highly esteemed as those in the more elevated situations. The very finest qualities are too delicate for exportation; and Mr. Inglis states, that he tasted cheese in Switzerland far superior to any that can be purchased either in London or Paris. Throughout the commune of Gruyere the inhabitants are above poverty.

## MOSSES AND THEIR ALLIES.

### CHAPTER I.

Is there a pastoral poem extant which does not in some part or other sing the praise of "mossy banks" or "moss-grown fountains?" Is there, or has there ever been, a landscape-painter who has not longed to give some idea of the exquisite tinting which he sees bestowed on rocks and ruins, trees and banks, by the growth of those insignificant portions of the vegetable kingdom, the mosses and lichens?—or a lover of nature, albeit by profession neither poet nor painter, whose eye has not dwelt with delight on the rich verdure of a moss-clothed vale or hillock, or the brilliant colouring of a lichen-painted rock or ruin? Virgil bids that a "quiet station" be found for the bees, saying,—

"Near a living spring their mansion place,  
Edged round with moss, and tufts of matted grass."

Milton tells us of "Echoe's mossy couch;" Shakspeare, too, often extols this verdant carpet, as when Arviragus promises that the fair Fidele shall

"Not lack

That flower that's like thy face, pale primrose; nor  
The azure harebell, like thy veins; no, nor  
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander  
Outsweetened not thy breath; the ruddock would—  
With charitable bill—bring thee all these,  
Yea, and furred moss besides, when flowers are not,  
To winter-ground thy corse."

And yet, lovely as is the whole of the moss tribe, and dear to poet, painter, and the lover of scenery, how comparatively few among us are there who have any knowledge of the curious